

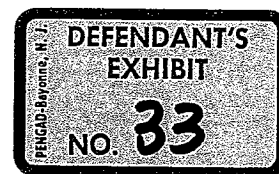
# **EXHIBIT 21**

President Arafat Addresses the Palestinian People

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## President Arafat Addresses the Palestinian People

December 16, 2001



On the occasion of Eid Al-Fitr, President Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestine National Authority, delivered a speech on December 16, 2001, in which he underlined Palestinian unity, reaffirmed the credibility of the Palestine Liberation Organization, stressed the full and immediate cessation of armed operations, and called upon the Israeli government and people to return without delay to the negotiations table.

Following is a transcript of the President's speech:

We will, without doubt,  
Help our apostles and those  
Who believe, (both)  
In this world's life  
And on the Day  
When the Witnesses  
Will stand forth-

Sadaqa Allahu Al Athim.

Brothers and Sisters,  
Sons and Daughters of our struggling people,  
Nation of great people,  
Mothers, fathers, and brothers of our martyrs,

You who have offered the most priceless gift, your own flesh and blood in the quest for freedom and independence and on the road to Palestine and Jerusalem Al-Sharif.

You who are languishing in prison, and who have been wounded, with your endurance, your wounds, your pain and your hope, you have composed a heroic legend unique in this age, bringing us within sight of Jerusalem Al-Sharif, the capital of our independent Palestinian state.

My beloved ones in all cities, villages, and refugee camps, within Palestine and in exile, you have composed the epic of national struggle and the miracle of and steadfastness of endurance- to you alone we owe the safekeeping of our national cause, the preservation of our just and legitimate objectives and the unwavering assurance of their realization.

From my heart and my very being I greet you and wish the best on this blessed Eid.

On this scared occasion, I reach to you speaking to your hearts and minds, laying before you with clarity the facts as they are. I do so in order to reflect collectively on all matters that concern us all and to reason together on our decisions and our future course. I am confident that this people, this proud and valiant nation, has the clarity of vision, the lucidity of awareness, and the strength of will and determination to enable it to overcome all difficulties and challenges in order to achieve its rights and protect its Christian and Muslim holy sites. Our nation has made our victory certain and inevitable on our own and free blessed land, the first of the Qiblas and the third of the most sacred mosques, the site of the Nocturnal Journey of our prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and the birth of Jesus Christ, peace be upon him.

Our national unity is the firm foundation that has preserved our national struggle and perseverance throughout the decades. It has provided our people's cause of continuity and success. Similarly, it has provided our decision to pursue a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace with all means of safeguards, assurances of rights, and requirements for the unwavering pursuit of the goals of our national consensus without surrender and without losing site of our priorities both in decision-making and in action.

Hence, from my position of responsibility and in the name of the Palestinian leadership, I wish to reaffirm the profound and candid definition of national unity in that it embraces all factions and national forces as well as all sectors of society and grassroots organizations in their commitment to the choices and decisions of national

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consensus as embodied by our National, Legislative, and Central Councils.

Thus, the Palestine Liberation Organization has been, and remains, the essential choice of our people in the homeland and in exile. The PLO is our force of cohesion, the leader of our struggle, the embodiment of our legitimacy, and our official representative before the world. Similarly, our National Authority remains faithful to our people's aspirations, the solid foundation for our nascent independent Palestinian state with its capital Jerusalem Al-Sharif, God willing. The PNA's elected Legislative Council and all its institutions, including the legislative and executive authorities, and its indisputable legitimacy through the ballot box, as well as its unanimous international recognition, have all paved the way for the future of and relations with the state of Palestine.

I take this opportunity to affirm once more our democratic choice and readiness to conduct municipal and legislative elections as soon as conditions render them appropriately secure.

In view of the standing of the PNA, as well as its current and future significance, the Sharon government has launched a vicious war against it, targeting its institutions and installations, its police and security personnel, its infrastructure (the infrastructure that we had worked assiduously with our brothers and allies to rebuild), its citizens, private property, schools and hospitals, fields, mosques and churches, farms, and the olive trees that stand to the authentic and longstanding heritage of this people and its deep-rootedness in land and history.

Indeed, it is a war launched on a people and its Authority; its resources; its personal, social, and economic security; and its legitimate dream to pursue a future free of occupation, oppression, and humiliation.

From the depth of this agony and this epic endurance of our people and institutions, I declare that this immoral and malicious war will not break the resolve of this great people, nor will it taint the will and pride of a people that stands firm in the face of indignity, as history has stood witness.

Given these conditions, dear brothers, I wish to affirm that we will not allow anyone whomsoever to undermine our great national and civilized endeavor, nor obstruct its path, distort its image, or falsify its pristine Arab and national essence.

We shall not stand for more than one Authority on this land, in this community and this homeland. Ours is an Authority whose decisions must be respected and commitments must be honored. When it concludes an agreement or undertakes an initiative, its full and unquestioned credibility must remain intact.

Dear brothers, we have declared a state of emergency and have undertaken a series of steps and measures that we intend to pursue, including declaring as outside the law all illegal organizations and bodies that carry out terrorist activities. We have undertaken a cease-fire initiative, and it is imperative that all respect and abide by this initiative without exception. I am fully aware of the intentions behind Sharon's escalating military assaults, his siege of our cities, towns, and refugee camps, of his occupation of our areas, exploiting operations carried out against Israeli civilians- these operations that we have condemned and continue to denounce.

This complex conflict in which we find ourselves does not and must not allow for the undermining of the credibility of the Palestinian leadership and its decisions. We must not allow Sharon and his military establishment, nor must we grant them all that they need in terms of pretexts so as to escalate their aggression, nor should we provide them with the means to label our brave and legitimate struggle for liberation as terrorism or as the killing of civilians.

Once again, I reaffirm today the full and immediate cessation of all armed operations. Again, I call for the total halt of all operations, particularly suicide attacks, that we have always denounced, and we shall hold accountable all those who facilitate and plan them. The same applies to the firing of mortars that serve no purpose except to provide the justification for Israeli assaults against us.

Any violation of this decision will be deemed as causing grave damage to the supreme national interests of our people and of the Arab nation, and all violators will be relentlessly prosecuted. Our objective is to reaffirm the credibility of our choices and course of action in order to restore calm for the implementation of the Tenet understandings, and to return to the negotiating table, which remains the only means for the resolution of the conflict.

I am confident that our national consensus will remain firmly focused on the objectives of freedom, independence,

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the building of the independent Palestinian state with its capital Jerusalem Al-Sharif, within the framework of the framework of the resolutions of international legitimacy 242, 338, 425, and 194 (pertaining to the Palestinian refugees) and the principle of land-for-peace.

Dear sisters and brothers,

We stand here on this sacred land of our pledge, defending the nation's honor, dignity, and integrity and safeguarding its Christian and Muslim holy sites.

I extend my most heart-felt gratitude and appreciation to all those brothers and friends throughout the world who have provided us with political, moral, and material support, both at the popular and official levels. Like all other Palestinians, I feel a tremendous sense of reassurance whenever Arab, Islamic, non-aligned, and other international fora convene either at our request or for our sake. It constitutes a constant and renewed message to the world that the Palestinians do not stand alone, and that the Arab nations and their friends throughout the world remain at their side, committed to their cause and objectives and to the protection of their most sacred Christian and Muslim sites in the Holy Land.

Dear sisters and brothers,

We must fully grasp the latest international developments, particularly in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on September 11th 2001, and their impact on our cause and our rights. We shall always continue to safeguard our relations and contacts with all effective parties throughout the world. We shall also make sure that we fully comprehend all rapid developments, and that we deal with them with full awareness, composure, and balance. We shall endeavor as well to maintain international mobilization and solidarity with our cause and rights, at a time in which we face deliberate distortion and incitement against us, and in which we face unjust attempts to tarnish with the label of terrorism our legitimate stand for liberation and for ending the occupation, as endorsed by international legitimacy.

I can proudly state that with the sacrifices and endurance of our people, and with our responsible conduct in this complex and multi-faceted conflict, we have succeeded in defeating all attempts at falsifying the legitimate authenticity of our struggle and the nobility of its objectives. In this context, we have achieved unprecedented accomplishments.

The justice of our struggle has been effectively reinforced by the vision presented by Secretary of State Collin Powell pertaining to the Palestinian question, which was preceded by President George W. Bush's declaration before the United Nations of his commitment to establishing the state of Palestine. It was reinforced by this latest clear and decisive stance of the European Union, Russia, the United Nations, Arab and Islamic countries, non-aligned nations, and the international community. All these positions attest to the inevitability of the achievement of all our national and legitimate rights. The fairness and credibility of our people's struggle and cause are further evidenced in the maintaining of strong and solid friendships and alliances with states and peoples throughout the world.

At this point, and in your name, the great and steadfast Palestinian people, I shall address the Israelis as a whole with a message of absolute clarity: Our dialogue began decades ago. Side by side, and in the most difficult of conditions, we struggled along with the peace forces and in defiance of a legal and political ban imposed by several Israeli governments. We strove in order to legitimize dialogue as the basis for reaching mutual understanding, and negotiations as the means to achieve mutually beneficial results.

Our joint insistence on dialogue enabled us to reach Madrid, Oslo, and other stations on our road to peace-the peace of the brave, for your children and for ours.

At this point, I renew our pledge to continue the dialogue, and I call on the government of Israel to abandon the illusion that tanks and airplanes are capable of accomplishing what should be achieved only through negotiations and mutual understanding. We are not seeking the impossible. We do not constitute a threat to the existence of the state of Israel. We want the restoration of our land, including Jerusalem, which was occupied in 1967. Our position is endorsed by international legality. We seek the withdrawal of Israeli forces from this land occupied in 1967, including the settlements, and this is consistent with international legality.

We seek the honest and accurate implementation of all agreements concluded between us, and the resumption of

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negotiations on permanent status issues without forgoing the preliminary achievements of Oslo, Wye River, Camp David, Sharm Al-Sheikh, Paris, and Taba.

In all candor, we seek a genuine Palestinian state, with everything that the word implies, with Jerusalem as its capital, alongside the state of Israel.

As for the tanks that pervade our cities and villages, the planes that destructively shell them in contravention of international law as well as all norms of civilized behavior and military ethic, the siege in all its forms, and the internationally-prohibited collective punitive measures, which are being exercised by the Israeli government-all these will not defeat the will and determination of the Palestinian people.

I renew my invitation to the people, political powers, institutions and government of Israel to return without delay to the table of negotiations and to proceed immediately to terminate these grave inhumane measures being exercised against our people and which serve no purpose except the aggravation of conditions and rendering security, peace, and stability in the region all that more distant.

In conclusion,

To my beloved people, the great and proud nation within the homeland and in exile, I greet you and reach out to you so that together we will plant an olive tree on the grave of every martyr, for all that was destroyed shall be rebuilt, God willing and with the determination of the people. All beautiful hopes shall be realized with God's will. Victory is an hour's patience away.

And to enter your temple  
As they have entered it before,  
And to visit with destruction  
All that fell into their power

God will not fail  
In His promise,  
Sadaqa Allahu Al Athim,

Peace be upon you.



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